

## Chapter 8

# Let It Go: A Journey Toward Elementary Student–Driven Media Production Aligned With the CCSS

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### ABSTRACT

*This case study introduces a two-year process in which a fourth grade teacher working with a library media specialist experienced a successful integration of digital and media literacy practices. During that time the fourth grade teacher adopted a less protectionist approach by having her students explore different multimedia production projects to enhance their learning in social studies. This book chapter introduces the process of both the fourth grade teacher as she explored new instructional strategies to incorporate media production and the Common Core State Standards and the library media specialist as a support team member. The standards index and its media production application can help educators integrate media production into their classrooms. This case study can help promote media production activities as they foster 21st century skills in elementary students.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the increasing use of digital media by children, teachers need to adjust their pedagogy in order to connect with students. More and more, children consume and create media (Perrin, December 2015), which means these children have a different learning experience in and out of school. As public schools implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), learning becomes a multimedia experience, using

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3417-4.ch008

problem solving and project-based learning as instructional strategies. In order to address the home-school gap and promote meaningful learning as advocated by the CCSS, elementary school teachers can incorporate digital literacy into any subject matter in order to engage students and enhance their learning.

This chapter introduces one case study out of a two-year digital literacy implementation at Narragansett Elementary School, a New England K-4 public school. The three authors took part in a whole-school initiative to integrate a digital literacy practice. The two-year process started as Brien Jennings, the library media specialist felt he was teaching in isolation and reached out to the Media Education Lab at the State university. As he brought the new practices to Carol Prest, the 4th grade teachers, they explored it with Yonty Friesem, the Media Education Lab staff, as a collaborative effort. In this chapter, the three authors describe this process as in isolation, reaching out, bringing in, exploring, and collaboration. Prest is a 4th grade teacher at the Narragansett Elementary School who took a leadership role. She volunteered to be a member of the catalysts teacher group - a group of eleven teachers who provided professional development to the school teachers. Jennings is the school library media specialist who brought the idea of integrating digital literacy to the school after attending the State University's Summer Institute in Digital Literacy. Friesem is the associate director of the Media Education Lab who became part of the support team at the school. Using qualitative observations, in-depth interviews, and self-reflection, the data collected showcases the two-year process of successful implementation of digital literacies in a fourth grade level class. With student artifacts such as portfolios, blogs, and videos, we can see how the process of integrating technology is not merely a technical/vocational one, but rather a change in the teacher's state of mind.

Collaboration is a word often heard in schools. It is routinely spoken of as the ideal; something to be sought after. The level and quality of teacher collaboration can be linked to improved student achievement (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen & Grissom, 2015). Quality collaboration leads to quality teachers, leads to quality student achievement. Yet, there is rarely any real opportunity for the type of collaboration that goes much beyond the temporary or much deeper than the surface. It tends to be a concept that exists on various professional development days, briefly catches the imaginations of a portion of the faculty, and eventually succumbs to the realities and pressures of working in public education. Great in theory, but not quite feasible. Based upon *Self-Determination Theory* (Pink, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), teachers should find their intrinsic motivation to implement digital media in order to have a successful learning experience for both them and their students.

## **BACKGROUND**

Digital media empowers users to access information, analyze and evaluate, create messages, and reflect upon usage (Hobbs, 2010). At the same time, it calls for social responsibility (Gardner & Jenkins, 2011). One of the biggest challenges in adapting media literacy pedagogy is teachers' protectionist approach. Buckingham (1998) explained that the learning process must be student-centered and not a top-down approach where teachers are demystifying media messages to protect students from the negative influence of the media. In other words, instead of seeing the young students as victims of the media that needed to be protected, teachers should engage students' popular culture in order to empower them to critically analyze media messages they consume and even be able to produce their own media messages. This empowering approach is challenging when teachers are in isolation. Sharing the control over the class content and activity with students means that there is a chance of disorder and transgression (Parry, 2013).

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